

*Selected
Poems
of*

ROBERT
HAVEN
SCHAUFFLER

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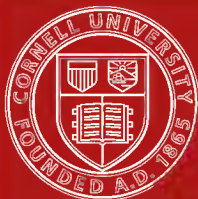
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Selected poems of Robert Haven Schauffle



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SELECTED POEMS OF
ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

SELECTED POEMS

OF

ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

AUTHOR OF
"SCUM O' THE EARTH,"
"THE WHITE COMRADE,"
"MAGIC FIRE, ETC."

19 22



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TO
BEVERLEY BAXTER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is a selection from my three American volumes of verse. Four poems have been chosen from "Scum o' the Earth," nine from "The White Comrade," and twenty-two from "Magic Fire."

I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy of the editors of the following publications in which certain poems here included have appeared: *The English Review*, *The Sunday Express* (London), *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *The Outlook* (New York), *The Touchstone*, *Contemporary Verse*, *The Lyric*, *Harper's*, and *The Yale Review*.

R. H. S.

LONDON, 1922.

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FROM "MAGIC FIRE AND
OTHER POEMS"

MAGIC FIRE

A candle suddenly pierced the night
Where our young curlyhead lay sleeping.
He woke, half dazzled by the light ;
Then we saw creeping
Into the mystery of those sleep-dimmed eyes
The dawn of deep surprise,
As he beheld the draught-blown flicker leaping

He crowed and clapped his hands in extasy
And held them forth to capture
And to caress that thing of rapture.
Thereat, in the exuberance of his pleasure,
Swaying he rose and trod a rude, instinctive
measure.

So, on the earthen floor
Of his primæval dwelling,
Might dance a stone-age man in Labrador.

And then, as we
Watched our light-drunken boy
And felt his gaiety-upwelling,

SELECTED POEMS

Faintly we seemed to hear
Vibrating down the ages, wild and clear,
Reverberations of the primal joy
Our savage fathers knew when first
Into a bleak and groping world there came,
And on their bodies beat,
The power and glory of Promethean heat,
And on their spirits burst
The magic flower of flame ;
And life surged half a heaven higher
As man began his awed, extatic dance
Around that new-born radiance,
His first home fire.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

TABULA RASA

His elders think of Curlyhead's baby mind
As of a virgin leaf
Whereon the hours have been too brief
To leave one written character behind.

How would they tremble if they were to look
Within that tiny head
And find no blank page, but instead
The hieroglyphs of a most ancient book

Inscribed in curious, dim ancestral ink
By hands long laid to rest
When Pharaoh's oldest palimpsest
Was still papyrus blowing on Nile's brink.

There they could read a wordless battle-song
Older than human time,
Roared in the steaming jungle slime
By many a fanged and furry simian throng.

There are weird sounds of worship that sufficed
To tell the love of God
In uncouth fanes our fathers trod
Ten thousand years before the cross of Christ.

SELECTED POEMS

PORTALS OF THE DAWN

*(Dear Kitty Low, the day I met you, keen
And fresh and laughter-loving and sixteen,
Finding this world a luscious, mellow pippin
Just waiting for your zestful teeth to dip in,—
You tranced me with your young, hypnotic power
To be a boy with you for one glad hour.
Then off you tripped and left me in the cold
Where I feel haggard, lined and strangely old.
But first you set beneath my aged bonnet
The sentiments reflected in this sonnet) :*

Earth yields to man no more delicious joy
Than for a vivid moment to recapture
The magic world he dwelt in as a boy :
To know the tang of grapes again,—the rapture
Of forest brooks, the scent of whittled ash,
The glamour of the pirate beacon's glow,
And spirit casements opening for a flash
On sunrise heavens of the long ago.
Earth yields to man no more insidious pain
Than when his dulling senses yearn to be

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Tasting the old sweet sting of love again,
The old sharp kelpy fragrance of the sea ;
Only to find how far his feet have gone
Forth from the dewy portals of the dawn.

SELECTED POEMS

ROMANCE

I. RENCONTRE

Just now when, at the door,
I touched your hand,
Murmuring the set forms that strangers use,
I could not choose
But thrill and tremble to meet afresh
The delicate spiced fragrance of the flesh
Known and beloved by me of yore
Under the glimmering domes of Samarkand,
When I rode back a victor from that war—
The wildest Samarkand had seen—
Darling, and made you queen.

You are my woman !
Aeons before the first dim page
Of history was traced by hands uncouth
In the world's twilit youth,—
We groped, not wholly human,
And found and held each other dear.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Since then, age following age,
After our every secular re-birth,
Torn betwixt hope and fear
And a self-scornful mirth,
Lonely we search a desolate earth
Until—the sudden, blinding bliss
Of hours like this.

Could we but surely see
All that of which your sweet, half-startled eyes
Dimly, as through a veil, my soul apprise,—
Like disembodied minds we would behold
The incredible pageant of all history
Stupendously unrolled,
Where through our lives as mates
Have twined their ever linkéd fates ;—
And we would recognise
Beneath what unpropitious skies,
From what insane and bestial wars,
What agonising straits on land and sea,
From what white bliss in other stars,
From under what glowing surf of hell submerged
We have, all-conquering, surged
To meet as mates again
In this dear world of men—
To what high end, for what fair destiny ?

SELECTED POEMS

II. WIRELESS

Oh we are close indeed,
Yet do not touch ;
Our bodies have no need
For even so much
As the most delicate caress of finger-tips
To be aware that our souls' lips
Are pressing each on each,—
Yet not too wildly one for murmured speech.

With bodies yet aloof we feel the spark
Of the swift current leap from hand to hand
Without a touch, and make the other understand.
From spirit's arc it leaps to spirit's arc,
More potent, far, than the mere lust
Of dust for carnal dust.
For we are of the blessed few
Who thrive on heaven's dole,—
Strong, vivid bodies drenched with soul,
Even as with mountain dew
Is drenched the fleece of many a dawn-flushed ~~f~~ewe.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

And now as we draw nearer
So that this warm hand lingers
Lightly upon your sweet smooth fingers,
My vision of the very you grows clearer,
More human, dearer.
With reverent surprise,
Through spirit-quicken'd eyes,
I read the page of you
As if my hand, divorced from my own will,
Impelled by some unearthly thrill,
Were setting down the music of your soul
Upon a dim, ethereal scroll
Unseen by mortals hitherto.

SELECTED POEMS

III. WORD MUSIC

When my rash pen endeavours to exalt
The movements or the policies of the time,
Decking my favourite theories in rhyme,
The measures move on leaden feet that halt
Like craven warriors dreading the assault.

When "numbers" mathematically chime
Their voices sound to me no more sublime
Than bones an earthquake rattles in a vault.

But there is music when the full heart sings
The murmurous intimations of the dawn
Where virgin peaks flush in the twilit blue ;
And melody mounts up on moth-like wings
When I have passed, upon your shadowy lawn,
A night of glory with the thought of you.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

IV. THE LOOM

The shuttles of the spirit ply
Swiftly between us two
Among the shining filaments that tie
My heart to you.

Threading the crimson woof they race,
Defying mould and moth,
To weave a gift for our most holy place,—
Love's altar cloth.

SELECTED POEMS

V. TO YOU, ABROAD

Though you have left this land,
Our minds walk hand in hand.

Parted by ocean's bowl,
We whisper soul to soul.

Your way turns east, mine, west,—
Your bosom burns my breast !

Space cannot mar the bliss
Of holy hours, like this,

That make a swift, sublime
Eternity of time.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

VI. THREE WORDS

I had not known seven days could be seven years !

What sombre glory, what bright agony
Your absence brought to me
That lingering, breathless week of hopes and
fears !—

Crowned by this frantic night
When I, now worm, now god, await my torment
and delight.

At last through the relief of long-pent tears
Your loveliness appears.

At last I touch your finger tips
And worship them with trembling lips.

Lightly I brush your cheek,
And try to speak,—
And fail ;

Because, to tell that tale
No words avail.

I had not known seven days could be seven years !

SELECTED POEMS

About your supple body my arms wind ;
My fingers find
Your breast,
And sink to troubled rest.
My tongue
Worships your bare
Sweet shoulders, your unruly hair,
And reels divinely stung
By passion's drouth
And maddened by love's opiate, among
The poppies of your mouth.

Now suddenly,
As you lean trembling close to me,
Seeming to my unsubtle wit
Passion's true archetype and counterfeit,—
You utter three low words.
With three low words,
Quiet as slumbering birds,
Soft as a far heard vesper bell,
You toll my rapture's knell ;
With three scarce whispered words,
Still as the earthward fall of giant bombs
That turn great cities into tombs,
You send my heaven crashing down to hell.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

And, as I clasp you still, my joy and woe,
And crystal-gaze the future in your eyes,
There I behold pale, uncouth forms arise
With bar and rack and flame, our lives to sever.

.

That was an hour ago. . . .
I had not known an hour could be for ever !

SELECTED POEMS

VACATION

When last the moon was slim I saw Fate loom
Athwart my path, lowering, malevolent ;
The earth was black with blood where his feet
went ;

His brow was harrowed by the wrath of doom.
Shrouding my future in his ghastly gloom,
To his dæmonic will my will be bent ;
And I knew then what is the punishment
Of lost souls shuddering in their trap-like tomb.

Now all is changed ! Breezes of hill and sea
Have blown to ribbons that old scarecrow
“ Fate ” ;
Brooks brawling past my knees, precipitate,
Have brawled their verve into the marrow of me.
Nor care I now what foes my steps await.
I close with life ; I am vowed to victory.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

NONSENSE

Life is a sorry compound of gold and silver and
stubble,
Of roses and wormwood and weeds, of rubies and
rubble.

I will take all life to my heart, and who knows
but I may, ere long,
See the stubble turn gold and the wormwood
bear roses of song ?

SELECTED POEMS

THE MAGIC DICTIONARY

Now why do some words charm us,
Intrigue us or alarm us

More than the things they mean ?
We are so much less keen

On the exact intent
Of what they represent

That we become suspicious
Their powers are adventitious.

The words : barb, den, decoy
Give me mysterious joy.

Such magic nouns as : dragon,
Vault, vampire, funnel, flagon,

Lance, leopard, loam and lair
Electrify my hair ;

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

And there is something wrong
With : pigmy, piston, prong.

Rod, razor, ratchet-wheel
And forge, all make me feel

That it is imbecile
To let my backbone thrill

When their slight names are spoken.
My spirit must be broken

Of answering to the call
Of ape and asp and awl.

And leaping at the sound
Of morgue and mask and mound.

Why should these words act so?—
From me you'll never know.

Reader, can you think why?
Cudgel your brains and try !

I'll give the first to guess
A pot of gold—or less.

SELECTED POEMS

CYTHEREA

I have escaped from her,
The creature with the beckoning breast
And lustful eyes.

I have escaped the velvet, feline purr
Of that voluptuous voice,
The talons keen as thorns—
(Were those the thorns that pierced the god-man's
brow ?)

I have escaped to where the soul may rest
And in its proud untrammelled realm rejoice,—
To where the mind
Triumphantly may find
The sphere it most can prize,—
The battlefield of long, creative morns
Cleansed by the austere wind.

I have escaped from her
While she was gluttoned. . . . Now

The heavy lashes
Half hide the drowsy, grey
Hypnotic eyes
Whose brands are banked with ashes.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

I will flee far away !
I will take the wings of morning
And make my solitary landing where,
Hard by some ash-grey shore,
Spirit and mind and frame may float
In water sparkling fresh
And clean as glacial air.
Then on that iron shore—
Sexless and utterly remote
From the dread gift that Eve to Adam bore—
Shall I lie down and watch the baldhead eagle
 soar
Unfluttering to his craggy nest.
Like him shall I know rest.
Never shall I awake to find the bare,
The fresh,
The radiant flesh
Of her incomparable side
Pressed close to mine, unsatisfied;
Nevermore, nevermore
Be dizzyed by the fragrance of her hair,
Or know the pulse's maddened heave
When her warm breast my bosom stings.
For ever will I leave . . .

Fool that I am ! . . . She too has wings !

SELECTED POEMS

ETCHINGS

Some memories of my youth I find
Bitten with acid on my mind.

These etchings have been drawn by chance,
By the keen point of fortune's lance,

They show such persons or events
As mark those swift enlightenments

When childhood's quivering senses gain
A new perception for the brain.

Therefore the years preserve for me
The everlasting quality

Of pictures other folk might rate
A waste of mental copper-plate.

That cripple-man nurse said would get me
If I weren't good—how *he* upset me !

Still I can see him stumping near ;
He spells for me the birth of fear.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

The steerage where those poor folk sing
Says : Music is a lovely thing.

That minnow in the broken dish
Means : the vast fun of catching fish.

That cave scooped with an old quart measure
Holds an earthful of hidden treasure.

White flowers and a snowy bed ;
I laid them at my mother's head

Before she drew her last, faint breath.
White flowers show me love and death.

SELECTED POEMS

MUSIC IN HOSPITAL

The flame of my life burned low ;
 They thought I was all but dead.
“ He has not very far to go ! ”
 Their whispering said.

Suddenly over the way,
 Outswelling the din of the street,
A piano began to play ;
 I found it sweet.

Only a halting machine
 Grinding an elfin tune
With whirrings and whangings obscene
 As a tipsy buffoon ;

Yet to me it meant rapture and mirth
 And the endless continuing, after
These sorry adventures on Earth—
 Of beauty and laughter.

Then the flame of my life burned stronger,
 Blown-on by that musical elf,
And I settled to stay a while longer
 Making music myself.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

THE SALUTATION OF THE DAWN

(After the Sanscrit)

Hear now the salutation of the dawn.

Look well unto this day !
For it is life,—the very life of life.
Into the eddying strife
Of its brief stay,
As into some deep whirlpool's heart, are drawn
All verities that light your earthly way :
Action's bright glory and the bliss of growth
And beauty in her splendour,
Now in stern mood, now tender,
Though radiant in both.

For yesterday is but a dream,
To-morrow, but a vision.
But each to-day, lived in the perfect way,
Holds sadness in derision,—
Makes every yesterday a dream of joy,

SELECTED POEMS

Present though gone,
Which time can never cloy,—
Makes each to-morrow
A vision of hope untouched by care or sorrow.
Look well unto this day !

Such is the salutation of the dawn.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

THREE SONNETS OF HEAVEN

I. DREAM

(To the University of Virginia)

When I have done with unimmortal things
And dwell in heaven's gardens, blithe and free,
They will be kind to lesser ones like me,—
Whose souls, even while on Earth were brave
with wings,
What if great Homer finds my gate and sings
The music of his loud-resounding sea ?
And what if Michelangelo should be
Ready to paint his rare imaginings
Upon my mansion's wall ?

Hid from the street
I think that on my lawn a beechen dial
Will mark all hours, carved there by Rodin's
knife ;
And Brahms will deign to play with me the suite
Composed by Papa Franck for my dear viol
Of mellow wood cut from the tree of life.

SELECTED POEMS

II. EARTH AND HEAVEN

When dawns for us the bright, eternal day,
Shall we reject these lovely arts of Earth
And mock at them as broken toys whose worth
Passes with the brief hour of children's play?
Shall poets' domes and towers melt away
To the mean compass of a hovel's girth?—
The painted walls of Florence move our mirth
Like pavement daubs fouled by a passing dray?
No! Shakespeare's holy bread was fraught with
 heaven
Sublime on Earth,—sublime in the high heaven.
There Vinci's brush will stir us still like wine,
The vault of Rheims vibrate within our veins,
And Bach's deep voice make heaven the more
 divine.
God's fire shall warm the soul where'er He
 reigns.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

III. SEAWARD

(To E. F. Benson)

For ever soiled and yet for ever pure,
It draws into its depths, without a stain,
Whatever the polluted land can drain
From compost-heap and charnel ground and
sewer.
Earth generates no filth that may endure
When plunged within the exuberant, bright
main.
So round man's foulness and his festering pain
Lies fathomless the peace God shall assure
When Earth is shrivelled like a crumbling pod.
Upon man's coast thunders divinity.
That shall the soiled soul utterly purify
So it may pass the rapturous gate of God.
Death is a plunge within that stainless sea ;
Nor may man wholly live except he die.

SELECTED POEMS

TO K. DE N. S.

I. HARVEST

They heard that she was dying, and they came,
The reticent New England village folk,
And wrestled with their tongues and, stammering,
spoke
Their very hearts, torn betwixt love and shame.
The wheelwright brought a crock of flowering
flame
And, with moist eyes, said : " Madam, ef a stroke
O' the axe might save ye—(and this ain't no
joke)—
I'd cut my right hand off to do that same !"
When her white soul had sped the fisherman
rowed
A fare of fish—his parting gift—ashore,
And choked upon the words : " I never knowed
No one I liked so well as her afore."
And the charwoman sobbed : "'Twas me she
showed
How not to get downhearted any more."

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

II. SAFE

Now shall your beauty never fade,
For it was budding when you passed
From out this glare into the shade
Of fairer gardens unforecast,
Where, by the dreaded gardener's spade,
Beauty, transplanted once, will ever last.

Now never shall your glorious breast
Wither, your deft hands lose their art,
Nor those proud shoulders be oppressed
By failing breath or fluttering heart,
Nor, from the cheek by dawn possessed,
The subtle extasy of hue depart.

For ever shall you be your best;—
Nay, far more luminously shine
Than when our comradeship was blessed
By what on earth seemed most divine,
Before your body passed to rest
With what I then supposed this heart of
mine.

SELECTED POEMS

Now shall your bud of beauty blow
Far lovelier than I knew before
When, such a little time ago,
I looked upon your face, and swore
That Helen's never moved men so
When her white, magic hands enkindled
war.

As you sweep on from power to power
Shall every earthward thought you think
Irradiate my lonely hour
Until I taste the golden drink
Of Life, and see the full-blown flower
Whose opening bud was mine beyond the
brink.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

III. BEFORE THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Think not of me as one whom death could cheat
Of what men hold on Earth supremely good ;
Save for the miracle of fatherhood,
I have known all that makes a life complete :
Summits where poetry lies at music's feet ;
Nature's brown breast within the autumn wood ;
The uttermost bounty of love's plenitude ;
Hours when the God in me and Godhead meet.
But think of me as one solely content
To wait on Earth a desolate while alone,
Nor hasten forth where dying footsteps went,—
That he might spend his brain and blood and
bone
In the great cause, and, having fully spent,
Leap to the arms for evermore his own.

SELECTED POEMS

IV. ANDANTE CON MOTO

(Ludwig van Beethoven, opus 97)

Like a thread of gold lightning that connects
and reveals the summits of lofty cloud ranges at
midnight, this melody connects and reveals the
high places of my life.

When first we told our love, my dear, we
played this music with our two souls vibrating as
one.

It was graved in the gold band of betrothal I
slipped upon your arm that radiant afternoon in
Passy.

To its strains our lives were joined that foggy
London noon.

It helped us over our young years of struggle.
When we were happiest we played it in cele-
bration.

Like a thread of gold lightning it ran across the
cover of my first real book—inspired by you.

And that last time it sounded loveliest of all—
the night before you died.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

After black months of misery I played it with friends.

The images it evoked were overwhelming : I could scarcely hold the bow.

But suddenly in the midst of the music—you came back.

Since then you never fail to come whenever I call.

When all is silent about me sometimes I can almost touch your dear, spiritual hand, almost hear your thrilling voice, almost breathe the fragrance of your hair.

But when I am playing our melody, then truly do I feel the softness of your warm wrist across my shoulders, and know that your fingers are caressing old Gaspar, the viol-like quaint 'cello who has been, through everything, our faithful friend.

To-night when I played our Andante you were there, so near, so beautiful and confident and poignantly sweet that I thought my heart would break with pride and tenderness and passionate longing.

FROM "SCUM O' THE EARTH
AND OTHER POEMS"

“SCUM O’ THE EARTH”

I

At the gate of the West I stand,
On the isle where the nations throng.
We call them “scum o’ the earth”;

Stay, are we doing you wrong,
Young fellow from Socrates’ land?—
You, like a Hermes so lissome and strong
Fresh from the master Praxiteles’ hand?
So you’re of Spartan birth?
Descended, perhaps, from one of the band—
Deathless in story and song—
Who combed their long hair at Thermopylæ’s
pass? . . .

Ah, I forget what straits (alas!),
More tragic than theirs, more compassion-worth,
Have doomed you to march in our “immigrant
class”

Where you’re nothing but “scum o’ the earth.”

SELECTED POEMS

II

You Pole with the child on your knee,
What dower bring you to the land of the free ?
Hark! does she croon
The sad little tune
That Chopin once found on his Polish lea
And mounted in gold for you and for me ?
Now a ragged young fiddler answers
In wild Czech melody
That Dvořák took whole from the dancers.
And the heavy faces bloom
In the wonderful Slavic way;
The little, dull eyes, the brows a-gloom,
Suddenly dawn like the day.
While, watching these folk and their mystery,
I forget that we,
In our scornful mirth,
Brand them as "polacks"—and "scum o' the
earth."

III

Genoese boy of the level brow,
Lad of the lustrous, dreamy eyes
Agaze at Manhattan's pinnacles now
In the first, sweet shock of a hushed surprise ;

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Within your far-rapt seer's eyes
I catch the glow of the wild surmise
That played on the Santa Maria's prow
In that still gray dawn,
Four centuries gone,
When a world from the wave began to rise.
Oh, who shall foretell what high emprise
Is the goal that gleams
When Italy's dreams
Spread wing and sweep into the skies.
Cæsar dreamed him a world ruled well;
Dante dreamed Heaven out of Hell;
Angelo brought us there to dwell;
And you, are you of a different birth?—
You're only a "dago,"—and "scum o' the earth"!

IV

Stay, are we doing you wrong
Calling you "scum o' the earth,"
Man of the sorrow-bowed head,
Of the features tender yet strong,—
Man of the eyes full of wisdom and mystery
Mingled with patience and dread?
Have not I known you in history,
Sorrow-bowed head?
Were you the poet-king, worth

SELECTED POEMS

Treasures of Ophir unpriced ?
Were you the prophet, perchance, whose art
Foretold how the rabble would mock
That shepherd of spirits, ere long,
Who should gather the lambs to his heart
And tenderly feed his flock?
Man—lift that sorrow-bowed head. . . .
Behold, the face of the Christ !

The vision dies at its birth.
You're merely a butt for our mirth.
You're a "sheeny"—and therefore despised
And rejected as "scum o' the earth."

V

Countrymen, bend and invoke
Mercy for us blasphemers,
For that we spat on these marvellous folk,
Nations of darers and dreamers,
Scions of singers and seers,
Our peers, and more than our peers.
"Rabble and refuse," we name them
And "scum o' the earth," to shame them.
Mercy for us of the few, young years,
Of the culture so callow and crude,
Of the hands so grasping and rude,

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

The lips so ready for sneers
At the sons of our ancient more-than-peers.
Mercy for us who dare despise
Men in whose loins our Homer lies ;
Mothers of men who shall bring to us
The glory of Titian, the grandeur of Huss ;
Children in whose frail arms may rest
Prophets and singers and saints of the West.

Newcomers all from the eastern seas,
Help us incarnate dreams like these.
Forget, and forgive, that we did you wrong.
Help us to father a nation strong
In the comradeship of an equal birth,
In the wealth of the richest bloods of earth.

SELECTED POEMS

FRIEND SOUL

From the zest of the land of the living,
From work and reflection and play,
From the getting of love and the giving
I hasten away.

For I have a friend from the high land
Who's larked with me long on my plain ;
And now to his glamorous sky-land
We're posting amain.

Up yonder his mansions are legion ;
Though he's met on the street with a stare
Here, where I'm the lord of the region,—
So turn about 's fair.

We leave the snug inn on the high road.
I wave to my valley with pride.
Then we turn up the beckoning by-road
And swing into stride.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

THE SYMPHONY

Carry me home to the pine wood;
Give me to sleep by the sea ;
Leave me alone with the lulling tone
Of the south wind's phantasy.

For I am weary of discord ;
Sick of the clash of this strife,—
Sick of the bane of this prelude of pain,
And I yearn for the symphony—*life*.

SELECTED POEMS

THE MUSIC MAKER

*(In memory of an evening at Richard Watson
Gilder's home)*

Beneath the bow
Your live cords, ' *cello mio*, throb and stir,—
My viol-like, dreamful child of Gasparo,—
Raising from reverie your Lombard voice,
And bidding us rejoice,
In all the things of soul and sense that make
These beauty-consecrated chambers glow
As though they were
In your ancestral home by Garda lake.

Now, as beneath the tense exultant fingers,
The music flows or lingers,
The presence of the viol passes quite;
And, for a little space,
Rapt out of touch and sight,
With Bach the master I am face to face.

And now,
In ways unlike the laboured ways of earth—
I know not how—

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

That part of man which is most worth
Comes forth at call of this old sarabande
And lays a spirit-hand
With mine upon the strings that understand.

Our painter lends his palette to a tone
That is no more mine own.
Lo ! he that " from the sterile womb of stone
Raises up children unto God " is there
To make the sarabande in form more fair;
And our dear poet with the glowing eyes
Brings to the shrine of tone his evening sacrifice;
While, filling all the place, below, above,
There radiates the starlight of my love.

O comrade heart, shall life be thus when we—
Beyond the portal of eternity—
Shall enter into that long extasy ?

Shall we float thus upon a flood of tone,
Discumbered of these garments long outgrown,
Alone, yet gloriously un-alone ?

Yes, love, we shall relive this great to-day,
When our sheer souls, in the immortal way,
Have uttered what our lips might never say.

FROM "THE WHITE COMRADE
AND OTHER POEMS"

THE WHITE COMRADE

Under our curtain of fire,
Over the clotted clods,
We charged, to be withered, to reel
And despairingly wheel
When the signal bade us retire
From the terrible odds.

As we ebbd with the battle-tide,
Fingers of red-hot steel
Suddenly closed on my side.
I fell, and began to pray.
I crawled on my hands and lay
Where a shallow crater yawned wide;
Then,—I swooned. . . .

When I woke it yet was day.
Fierce was the pain of my wound;
But I knew it was death to stir,
For fifty paces away
Their trenches were.
In torture I prayed for the dark

SELECTED POEMS

And the stealthy step of my friend
Who, staunch to the very end,
Would creep to the danger-zone
And offer his life as a mark
To save my own.

Night came. I heard his tread,—
Not stealthy, but firm and serene,
As if my comrade's head
Were lifted far from that scene
Of passion and pain and dread;
As if my comrade's heart
In carnage had no part;
As if my comrade's feet
Were set on some radiant street
Such as no darkness could haunt;
As if my comrade's eyes
No deluge of flame could surprise,
No death and destruction daunt,
No red-beaked bird dismay,
Nor sight of decay.

Then, in the bursting shells' dim light,
I saw he was clad in white.
For a moment I thought that I saw the smock
Of a shepherd in search of his flock.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Alert were the enemy, too,
And their bullets flew
Straight at a mark no bullet might fail;
For the seeker was tall and his robe was bright;
But he did not flee nor quail.
Instead, with unhurrying stride,
He came,
Still as the white star low in the west,
And gathering my tall frame,
Like a child to his breast. . . .

Again I slept;—and awoke
From a blissful dream
In a cave by a stream.
My silent comrade had bound my side.
No pain was mine, but a wish that I spoke,—
A mastering wish to serve this man
Who had ventured through hell my doom to
 revoke,
As only the truest of comrades can.
I begged him to tell how best I might aid him,
And urgently prayed him
Never to leave me, whatever betide;
When I saw he was hurt—
Shot through the hands that were joined in prayer!
Then, as the dark drops gathered there

SELECTED POEMS

And fell in the dirt,
The wounds of my friend
Seemed to me such as no man might bear;
Those bullet-holes in the patient hands
Seemed to transcend
All horrors that ever these war-drenched land
Had known or would know till the mad war
end.

Then suddenly I was aware
That his feet had been wounded, too,
And dimming the white of his side
A dull stain grew.
"You are hurt, White Comrade!" I cried.
Already his words I foreknew:
"*These are old wounds,*" said he,
"*But of late they have troubled me.*"

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

TRYST

'Long about dusk I'd see him go
Almost a-runnin' through the snow
Bound for the marsh, like a feller who's late
Meetin' some girl, you know,—keepin' a "date."
"Jest like them dudes," thinks I, "to roam
With girls in the marsh, and their wives to
home!"

So, one fine day, I on with my hood
And follered his tracks to the edge o' the wood
Where the marsh begins, to see who it was
Meetin' my neighbour's man,—because
I liked Mis' Joyce,—and she oughter know
O' the goin's-on out there in the snow!

Well, what do you s'pose I saw?—Instead er
A girl, there wa'nt nothin' but common salt meader,
And him on the bridge pacin' up and down
Watchin' the grasses float and drown

SELECTED POEMS

In the flood o' the tide, and the cakes of ice
Swim up westward. He looked so nice,
And pleased and content, it seemed like he
Was findin' himself rare company;
And never once did he turn his head
From the west, to look for a skirt instead.

I sneaked back home by the pasture lane,
And studied and puzzled and addled my brain
To guess why he hurried so, only to stand
And gape at the west with his hat in his hand.

Next mornin' says I to my neighbour : " Say
Why does your man allus hurry that way
Past my house, the end of the day ? "
Says she : " To look at the sunset, dear,
Out where there's nothing to interfere."
Says I : " Now ain't you city folks queer!
What's in a sunset for to see ? "
" Look for yourself, my dear," says she.

So, late that day, I thought for to look
Out o' the winder near where I cook.
The sky was a nice red birthday cake
Spattered with candles.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Mercy's sake !

I dropped the cutter; I dropped the dough,
I stood there gapin' outdoors as though
One o' them fairy tales was true,
And I was a princess with nothin' to do
But watch a girl sewin' with silver thread
On pink satin curtains to hang 'round my bed

I hurried across and opened the door ;
Never seed nothin' so purty afore !
Then, under my eyes, things turned to a dore
O' melting gold, like a honeycomb.
Some bee must 'a' come from that fairy hive
And stung me, and made me feel all alive. .

Funny what tricks yer eyes will play
If any one happens to show 'em the way !

SELECTED POEMS

WORSHIP

I late this was the loftiest word I knew
To tell my worship of your body's grace,
Your eyes where love and laughter interlace
And when the gorgeous mind comes flashing
 through;—
My worship when the soul's transcendent hue,
Through irised windows, turns your lovelier
 face
Shrine-like into the Godhead's dwelling place :—
Next to my love for God is mine for you."

Thus yesterday; but now, since your white hand
Has led me upward to the promised land
Of this world's highest heaven, from this world's
 hell,
Through ways more dazzling than my sight may
 stand,—
Dearest, I love you more than prayer can tell,—
He were a saint who loved his God so well.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

THE WONDERFUL HOUR

I rambled alone in the marsh ;
The clouds hung forbidding and harsh ;
The ruts of the mean road bristled below
Their tatters of slushy snow.
Ebbing trickles of salt creek spread
Sad, colourless, dull as lead.
The brightness had fallen from the grass,
And the sparkle had flown from the bay;
No beauty nor cheer were left, alas!
Trusty nature had failed me to-day;
Her heartening word remained unspoken;
I thought her inviolate tryst was broken.

Suddenly dawned the wonderful hour;
I drank deep breaths of the primal power,
And the tides of my being began to glow
Like westerly surf when the sun is low.

SELECTED POEMS

My casements flew open that I might see
The magic, the worth and the mystery
Of runnel and sedge and gaunt-limbed tree.

From my work-a-day wrappings of murky cloud
I burst, as a man who should wake in his shroud
Might burst through the ring of the sorrowing
crowd.

My plod grew buoyant, my vision, keen ;
The river was glossed with a lacquery sheen.
Though the swords of the sun could not slash
through,

Each puddle was dreaming of turquoise blue.
Transmuted to amber the wet ruts lay,
And the mean marsh road was a royal way.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

PARADISE REVISED

(With the aid of The Magic Dictionary)

Playing hymn-tunes day and night
On a harp, *may* be all right
For the grown-ups ; but for me
I do wish that Heaven could be
Sort o' like a circus, run
So a kid could have some fun !

There I'd not play harps, but horns
When I chased the unicorns :
Magic tubes with pistons greasy,
Slides that pushed and pulled out easy,
Cylinders of snaky brass
Where the fingers like to fuss,
Polished like a looking-glass,
Ending in a blunderbuss.

I would ride a horse of steel
Wound up with a ratchet-wheel.
Every beast I'd put to rout
Like the man I read about.

SELECTED POEMS

I would singe the leopard's hair,
Stalk the vampire and the adder,
Drive the werewolf from his lair,
Make the mad gorilla madder.
Needle-guns my work would do ;
But, if beasts got closer to,
I would pierce 'em to the marrow
With a barbed and poisoned arrow,
Or I'd whack 'em on the skull
Till my scimitar was dull.

If these weapons didn't work,
With a kris or bowie-knife,
Poniard, assegai or dirk
I would make 'em beg for life ;
Spare 'em, though, if they'd be good
And guard me from what haunts the wood,
From those creepy, shuddery sights
That come 'round a fellow nights :
Imps that squeak and trolls that prowl,
Ghouls, the slimy devil-fowl,
Headless goblins with lassoes,
Scarlet witches worse than those,
Flying dragon-fish that bellow
So as most to scare a fellow. . . .

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

There, as nearly as I could,
I would live like Robin Hood,
Taking down the mean and haughty,
Getting plunder from the naughty
To reward all honest men
Who approached my outlaw's den.

When I'd wearied of these pleasures
I'd go seek for hidden treasures,—
In no ordinary way :
Pirates' luggers I'd waylay ;
Board 'em from my sinking dory,
Wade through decks of gore and glory,
Drive the fiends, with blazing matchlock,
Down below, and snap the hatch-lock.

Next, I'd scud beneath the sky-land,
Sight the hills of Treasure Island,
Prowl and peer and prod and prise,
Till there burst upon my eyes
Just the proper pirates' freight :
Gold doubloons and pieces of eight !

Then—the very best of all—
Suddenly a stranger tall
Would appear, and I'd forget

SELECTED POEMS

That we hadn't ever met,
And with waving cap I'd greet him
(Turning from the plunder yellow),
And I'd hurry hard to meet him,
For he'd be the very fellow
Who, I think, invented fun—
Robert Louis Stevenson.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

TO BROWNING, THE MUSIC MASTER

OH, I once was a lad
Of a single thought,
Melody-mad,
With ears for nought
But the miracles Bach and Beethoven wrought,
When suddenly you,
Out of the blue,
With your formal old master Galuppi, dropped,
And grim-eyed Hugues
Of the mountainous fugues,
And the rampired walls of the marvellous Abt,—
To build me, from Music's far-off strand,
A way to a humaner, dearer shore,—
A bridge to poetry-land.

Then to my soul I swore :
“ If poets may win such store
Of music's own highland air,
Yet abide in the common round,
Transmuting man's dusty ground
To gems for the world to wear,—

SELECTED POEMS

Theirs too is a priceless art,—
Is a thing that I fain would share,—
A thing that is near to my heart !”

Thus were a young soul's ears unstopped
By Galuppi and Hugues and the marvellous Abt,
Who bridged a way for ignorant feet
And parted wide for wondering eyes
The port of a second paradise ;
Showing how right it is, and meet
That a Schubert's voice may never repeat,
With the self-same thought and the self-same beat,
Measures a Milton's lips have dropped ;—
That music waxes where poesy wanes,
And, with thirsty lips to poesy's veins,
Grows by her want, by her wasting, gains.

For music, the protean, is this, and this :
The rainbow shimmer of love's first bliss,
A despairing gesture, a dream-like whim,
The down on the plumes of the Cherubim,
The body of Ariel, lissom and fresh,—
Too subtle for poesy's golden mesh,—
An exquisite, evanescent shape
That “breaks through language” to escape
To the bourne of that country, brighter, vaster,
Where now you are singing, dear Music Master.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

DIVERS

Clad in thick mail he stumbles down the floor
Of the dark primæval ocean ;—on his head
A casque more gross than ever helmeted
Crusader against Saracen. Before
His glass-dimmed eyes dart shapes like fiends of
yore,
Or like malignant spirits of the dead,
To snatch and snap the line where through is
fed
A meagre air to that strange visitor.
Stumbling we grope and stifle here below
In the gross garb of this too cumbering flesh,
And draw such hard-won breaths as may be
drawn,
Until, perchance with pearls, we rise and go
To doff our diver's mail and taste the fresh,
The generous winds of the eternal dawn.

SELECTED POEMS

HIDDEN TREASURE

(For George Gray Barnard's Cloisters on Washington Heights, New York City)

Embedded deep in the unlovely walls
Of hovel and enclosure, pen and byre,
These lovely shards of the old abbey halls
And towers lay hidden :—
Statue and plinth and subtly planed lunette,
Rare capital, incomparable tomb,—
Lost like a sapphire caked in mire,
Or pearl shell-ridden.

Concealed they lay, oblivious of their doom,
While, star-like, generations rose and set,—
More like us men, perhaps, than we know yet,
Who, in a whorl of worlds whose vision chokes
the breath,
Drowse on through time, mistaking life for death.

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Then came a man with vision to divine
The treasures in the wall.
He drew them forth and built of them a shrine
Where all
Might play their destined part,
And each long-hidden shard of loveliness
Express,
With individual art,
The myriad oneless that is beauty's heart.

Now what great hand shall delve into the wall
That crusts our mortal frame's immortal mind,
And rear therefrom a shrine our God may call
The temple of mankind ?

SELECTED POEMS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*If this my pen
Has ever seemed to move aright
And faithfully indite
Words that have come from bournes beyond my ken,—
Give no more praise to me
Than should his portion be
Whose fingers, with a wondering delight,
Move among viol-strings
And seek to give again
The fruits of greater minds' imaginings,—
Music that is the dower of all men.*

*For I am only he
Who seeks again to give,
Without initiative,
Faint melodies that, deep within his brain,
With joy that is half pain,
Sound echoed from the rapturous, distant throng
Of festivals that to all time belong.*

OF ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

*Alas ! my halting pen
Never may purely give that song again.
Alas ! the clownish hand
Whose fingers hover,
Fretting the string,
But powerless to recover
From music's wonderland
More than this harsher remnant-thing,
From what,—compact of Heaven's own dew and light
And murmurs of the bright,
The vast, harmonious, eternal main,—
The Lord of beauty set within this brain
For this my hand to echo how it can,
Crudely translating into coarser tone,
To sound above life's roar to every man,
Music no man may claim as his alone.*

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